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ABSTRACT

Intended for volunteers or prospective volunteers in the "Volunteers in Corrections" project, this manual provides data and discussion directly applicable to working with incarcerated offenders in Alaska. Background information is provided on the project, including history and objectives, reasons to volunteer, and services correctional volunteers can provide. Requirements for volunteers are listed. Alaska centers in the Anchorage area in which volunteers are involved are described. Material on preparation and support of volunteers presents security guidelines and discusses volunteer orientation, training, and supervision. Suggestions on the volunteer-offender relations cover being a good role model, confidentiality, and helping people to help themselves. Volunteer benefits (liability, workmen's compensation, meals, mileage) are also overviewed. Addresses and telephone numbers of frequent volunteer contacts (institutions and agencies) conclude the manual. (YLB)

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VOLUNTEERS IN CORRECTIONS



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Volunteer Manual

PREFACE

As a frequent visitor and counselor to persons in prison through the years, I have been impressed by three striking realities. First, the persons in prison are not greatly different from the rest of us who enjoy freedom. The prisoner has violated the law, been apprehended, prosecuted, found guilty, sentenced and incarcerated. However, with the exception of that act of crime, he may possess all the human qualities, ambitions, and needs of any other citizen. Our likeness may go deeper in that there remain free many other citizens just as guilty of similar crimes which went undetected. Few citizens have not violated some law at some time.

Second, prisons generally have more negative effect upon inmates than rehabilitative. Most criminologists accept the reality that prisons are schools of crime. Associations in prison often teach a novice how to be a more professional criminal. Few prisons provide the necessary educational and vocational opportunities that would equip the best intentioned inmate to return to the community prepared to make a legitimate living. Alaska's correctional centers are no exception.

Third, the nature of prison is to isolate the offender from society for protective and punitive purposes. Volunteers must understand that the primary responsibility of a correctional staff person is security. Even minimum security prisoner programs of family leave are conditional upon the mandate for security. Therefore, many prisoners have few if any visitors. The only human contacts afforded them may be correctional staff and other inmates.

My hope in creating the Volunteers in Corrections project was to establish a model and demonstrate a need to address the realities above. I anticipated that inmates would discover a new friend with something to share that would bridge the world between offender and citizen. I expected the volunteer to discover another human being not unlike himself. I believed that the result could be an inmate with changed motivation, new self-esteem, and ability to cope with the outside world when released. Our experience over the past two years indicates that this does happen.

The volunteer is the key to a successful program. But he must work in cooperation with the correctional staff and the inmate. It is a team effort. Correctional staff must be convinced that the volunteer understands and supports its role as well as meeting the inmate's need. This manual was designed to aid you in this total purpose.

I am indebted to William Huston, former director of the Division of Corrections and his successor, Charles Campbell, who have given strong support to our efforts and to the superintendents of the correctional centers and the supervisor of Probation/Parole here in Anchorage. Most of all I appreciate the labors of Doreen Ransom who carried the major responsibility for the work and success of this project.

Howard L. DeVore, Director
Alaska State Office of Volunteer Services

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INTRODUCTION

As a volunteer or prospective volunteer, you are anticipating involvement with a population that traditionally has been segregated from the public. Your concern is both needed and appreciated. Your contribution can have far-reaching implications for the restoration of offenders and for the welfare of our community as a whole.

We know you care, for you have taken this step forward to offer your help. We ask that you also take the time to prepare yourself by reviewing this manual from cover to cover so that you may enhance your effectiveness in the new environment in which you will serve. We have included only data and discussion that will be directly applicable and necessary for this new involvement. Those who would like to know more about various aspects of corrections may contact the volunteer director to locate other materials and resources.

Welcome!

ABOUT "VOLUNTEERS IN CORRECTIONS"

History and objectives

In America, the involvement of volunteers in criminal justice agencies, with professional coordination, began with the success of a program in Royal Oak, Michigan in 1959. The volunteer involvement in Royal Oak became a movement which spread rapidly throughout the country. Citizens worked in all phases of criminal justice activity: the courts, pre-trial, juvenile programs, prisons, parole, probation and residential centers.

In Alaska, Howard DeVore, director of the State Office of Volunteer Services, initiated a program for the Division of Corrections. DeVore was able to secure matching funds from the federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration and the State Criminal Justice Planning Agency. The Division of Corrections, under the direction of William H. Huston, offered its support for the implementation and maintenance of the volunteer program. This service began operation in April of 1978 when Doreen Ransom became the director of Volunteers in Corrections.

The objectives of this volunteer program are best stated in the words of the original grant written by DeVore, "Both offenders incarcerated and those on probation/parole need human relationships which provide models, caring, and for the rebuilding of self-esteem." Though volunteers may teach or fill other specific roles, a growth-promoting relationship between citizen and offender remains the major contribution of each volunteer.

Why volunteer?

Modern correctional systems are committed to protecting the public from the potential risks of criminal behavior by convicted offenders and to rehabilitation of offenders to a productive and socially cooperative life style. These goals are interrelated so that successful rehabilitation decreases the potential risk of criminal behavior. The fact is that few men and women are imprisoned for life. The majority of persons convicted of felonies will return to their communities in a relatively short time.

Will these people, in fact, return to society more productive and cooperative than before? Research data yields little conclusive evidence that any one therapeutic approach works--that is, reduces recidivism. But we know from our own experience that persons who see their incarceration or probation experience simply as punishment are angry. Criminal justice personnel and citizens may feel the sentence is justified, but if the offender believes his time and freedom have been taken solely for the purpose of punishment, he blames society for that waste. On the other hand, when he perceives that attempts are made to help him make changes that will improve the quality of his own life, his attitude is much improved.

There are several ways in which volunteers can have a substantial impact on the attitude and subsequent behavior of offenders. First, we know that a caring relationship with another person creates the kind of environment in which a troubled person can examine his behavior and values. The respect of another can enhance his self-esteem. The good example of another can help him to envision a new concept of what he himself can be and do.

We know, too, that people with low self-esteem have belief systems that help them deny that others care. In this way, they maintain a negative view of themselves and others and act accordingly. By offering their time and energy to offenders, volunteers make an irrefutable statement of caring and acceptance. Again and again, Alaskan offenders have expressed surprise and appreciation that people from their community choose to work with them without pay.

The interests and activities that volunteers share are the other vital contributions to the rehabilitation process. Assistance in learning employable skills and in making employment contacts are effective services, since so many ex-offenders are unemployed or underemployed.

But exposure to social and leisure activities is equally important. Men and women who are to leave behind their criminal life styles must find spiritual values, self-developing pursuits, and meaningful relationships with others if they are to fill the emptiness they once attempted to fill with drugs, alcohol, and negative behaviors. They may know intellectually that there are better things to do with their time. But they may never risk the unknown until someone whom they trust shares their experiences, encourages them, and even invites them along.

In addition to such direct services for offenders, volunteers bridge the gap between the agency and offenders and the surrounding community. Their presence is like a breath of fresh air in the daily tedium of even the best of correctional residences. They increase public understanding of the offender's needs and the agency's concerns in the rehabilitation process. By helping to restore the offender to a productive way of life, they contribute to public safety and to the quality of life for all members of the community.

How volunteers help

Currently, correctional volunteers provide a wide variety of services for incarcerated offenders. They may visit an inmate who has no regular visitors, and they can help him or her to locate employment, housing, etc. in preparation for release into the community. There are volunteers who devote time to tutoring inmates who are working for their General Educational Development test (G.E.D.) to complete requirements for a high school degree. Other volunteers teach informal classes in areas of special interest or academic courses for college credit.

Religious services and Bible Study classes are also conducted by volunteers. Persons who are qualified may facilitate counseling groups or offer one-to-one counseling for inmates.

Volunteers with recreational skills and interests have organized athletic events or taught athletic skills. Civic groups arrange special entertainment, and local musicians have performed for inmates.

In the Adult Probation Unit, citizens serve as volunteer probation counselors. Under supervision of a professional probation officer, they work on a one-to-one basis with adult offenders. By meeting regularly with their clients, they provide opportunities for wholesome socialization, guidance, and a helping hand.

GETTING STARTED

Becoming a correctional volunteer

Persons who are interested in volunteering to work with adult offenders in the Anchorage vicinity should contact the volunteer director (see address and phone listing, p. 18) to arrange an interview. Individuals or groups planning a special project may also contact the superintendent or his designee directly. If you arrange to meet with the volunteer director, you will have an opportunity to learn more about present and potential volunteer activities in all local facilities.

Requirements

1. Volunteers are expected to be persons of good character with a productive lifestyle. *
2. Volunteers complete an application form which provides contact information, work and volunteer history, and special interests and hobbies.
3. The personal interview with the volunteer director is designed to explore the volunteer's interests and expectations and provide him or her with information regarding possible placements. He will also learn more about the agency and offender(s) he may be working with.
4. Three personal references of the volunteer are contacted in writing for their recommendation concerning his involvement with offenders.
5. A routine police records check is made on all visitors to local correctional centers (other than those who use designated visiting rooms).

* Ex-felons who meet these criteria will be considered if they are no longer on parole and have had no recent involvement with the criminal justice system.

These are only a few of the ways in which volunteers have served. Each offender and setting has unique needs, and considering the individual resources of each volunteer, the possibilities are infinite. The important thing is that by donating his or her time and energy to the restoration of offenders, each volunteer is setting an example of caring and cooperation that offenders may emulate.

ABOUT CORRECTIONS

Volunteer placement sites

Presently, volunteers are involved in the following state centers in the Anchorage area: Anchorage Correctional Center (Third Avenue), Eagle River Correctional Center, and Ridgeview Correctional Center. Volunteers are also working with the Adult Probation and Parole unit.

Anchorage Correctional Center (Third Avenue)

Sentenced, adult, male offenders are held at the Third Avenue facility. Felons normally will be classified and sent to other facilities to serve their time. Misdemeanants and those with sentences of six months or less may serve out their time at this facility.

This building was not designed for long-term incarcerations. Availability of space, building design, and frequent turnover of inmates impose some limitations to the kind of programmed activities which can be offered.

The recommended capacity is 78 beds. Inmates live primarily in dormitories, although there are a few single cells.

Eagle River Correctional Center

This is a minimum/medium-security facility specifically designed for programmed activities. Residents are sentenced, adult, male offenders with three years or less to serve who indicate a willingness to participate in educational and other rehabilitative programs.

The design includes a gymnasium, machine shop and crafts area, library, classrooms, and an open living-dining area known as the community center. The men sleep in dormitory-style wings which include a living area for meetings and socialization within their wing. This living area may be toured by the public but is not normally used for events which include community participation. There is also a secured, contact visiting room where inmates can meet with friends and family. During warm weather months inmates and visitors have access to a picnic area and ball field.

The preferred capacity of this facility is 80 inmates. The original design called for double the present capacity, and the Division of Corrections is now taking steps to develop the facility to the proposed capacity.

Ridgeview Correctional Center

As the only local facility to house adult, female offenders, Ridgeview includes both sentenced and unsentenced women. The Intake Unit consists of two dorms and some single units. This is a close security area. New arrests are brought here to the Booking Office for intake processing. Women housed in the Intake Unit may include those who are awaiting trial, sentencing, or classification (which may send them to another facility or to the Program Unit), and those serving sentences of three months or less.

Women housed in the Program Unit are classified for medium or minimum security. The area includes four dormitories of up to four occupants each, a classroom, gymnasium, living and dining area, pottery lab, kitchen, and contact visiting area.

Adult Probation and Parole

The Adult Probation and Parole unit is a regional office responsible for the Southcentral Region. It serves approximately 600 clients in the Anchorage area alone, with an average case load of about 60-70 clients supervised by each probation officer. The majority of these clients are on probation rather than parole.

Correctional personnel

Each local correctional center is headed by a superintendent. The correctional center also includes among its staff an assistant superintendent, probation officer (institutional counselor), and correctional officers, including supervisors for each shift. The probation officer is responsible for coordinating classification of inmates, acts as a liaison between the institution and community resources for inmates, and reports to and meets with the Parole Board concerning individual inmates.

There may also be a psychological counselor, who provides psychological testing and professional group and individual counseling for inmates. Usually, one staff member is

assigned to act as program director for the facility, and is responsible for arranging academic, vocational, recreational, and therapeutic activities for inmates.

The Adult Probation and Parole Unit is headed by a district supervisor who reports to the administrator for the Southcentral Region. The staff consists of probation officers who counsel and supervise offenders on probation or parole. As peace officers, they also have the power to arrest.

PREPARATION AND SUPPORT OF VOLUNTEERS

Security guidelines

Requirements for each institution vary depending upon the incarcerated population and the type of facility. The volunteer and his staff liaison should identify these and discuss them at their initial meeting. However, observance of the following guidelines should permit the volunteer to work well in any correctional setting:

1. Carry personal identification with you when you are planning to enter a correctional center.
2. Sign in the volunteer log when entering and sign out when you leave.
3. Lock all weapons, prescription drugs, camera and sound equipment, valuables (including purses), and any articles you do not need for your volunteer assignment in your vehicle prior to entry. If necessary, you may turn them in to the correctional officer on duty who will secure them for you.
4. Any bags, valises, instrument cases, etc. should be offered to the officer on duty for inspection.
5. Do not bring food or personal items (soap, shampoo, etc.) in for inmates. If you wish to arrange for a special event involving food, consult with staff.
6. Do not give gifts to inmates. If you have a special plan in mind (such as donation of educational or recreational materials), you may be able to arrange this with staff.
7. Do not carry messages or correspondence in or out of the institution for inmates. They have proper channels for meeting these needs.
8. Do not exchange money with inmates. You may be able to purchase items for an inmate or from an inmate, but this should be handled through staff using the proper disbursement forms.
9. Determine the time the facility closes to visitors in the evening and leave at the appropriate time.
10. Report infractions or planned infractions to staff. Inmates know the rules. If one tells you about something which is against the rules, he or she may not be trusting you but testing you.

Volunteer probation counselors should report any violations of parole or probation stipulations to the probation officer. If it seems that the offender is showing signs that he will be "messing up", the volunteer will want to consult with staff without delay. They may find a way to help him to avoid another costly mistake.

When a volunteer has any questions or concerns, he or she should feel free to discuss them with his staff partner. If that person is not available, the shift supervisor will help answer any questions.

Orientation

Orientation of new volunteers may be arranged through individual or group meetings with the volunteer director and/or agency staff, depending on the volunteer's assignment and previous experience. This manual is intended to give you basic information which you will need prior to entering the facility.

If you have any questions concerning any aspect of your role as a volunteer, the volunteer director or your staff liaison will be glad to answer them. Volunteers shouldn't hesitate to ask questions--interested people ask the most questions, and staff appreciate this.

Training

The volunteer director will arrange special training sessions for volunteers as needed. He or she will also notify volunteers when appropriate training events are available either through the Division of Corrections or elsewhere in the community. On a space available basis, volunteers may participate in staff training offered by the Division's Training Academy.

Volunteers who would like more preparation for their placements and to learn new skills are encouraged to contact the volunteer director to request this assistance. They will also be able to obtain information regarding training and helping resources in terms of personnel, agencies, texts, etc.

Supervision

The volunteer director will arrange for each new volunteer to meet with an agency staff member prior to starting his or her new assignment. The staff member will review with the volunteer the job assignment in terms of what is to be accomplished, how, when, and with whom. He or she will help the volunteer get acquainted with the agency's facilities, personnel, and physical resources as needed for the volunteer's assignment. He will also provide up-to-date information on related institutional policies and security guidelines.

At the time of this initial interview with staff, the volunteer should make known his expectations regarding the work he will do. He should also express what he is willing to do and the limits he plans to observe in terms of giving his time and efforts. If he is undertaking a special project of some kind, he should arrange for the equipment and space he will need to do the job.

If the volunteer will be working one-to-one with an offender, the staff liaison will help the volunteer in identifying effective ways of working with this person. He will then introduce the volunteer to the offender, or arrange a subsequent meeting in order to do so.

Similar information may be helpful to the volunteer in a group situation. Incarcerated offenders in academic classes may, for example, be adversely affected by a recent event, such as a serious infraction by one or more inmates, or a denial of a request for a special privilege.

It's helpful when staff share this information. However, since they are on the job daily, they don't always remember. Volunteers should feel free to ask if there is anything they should know about working with their group and to talk with their staff liaison if they face puzzling behavior or attitudes of offenders.

Sometimes the volunteer's staff liaison at the correctional center is a program director or counselor who is not available after normal working hours. If at any time he or she cannot be contacted to answer a question, volunteers may consult with the shift supervisor for information or guidance.

THE VOLUNTEER-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP

"What they're in for"

Many people who enter a correctional facility for the first time to speak with offenders are curious about what crime each man or woman has committed. While this may be natural, it is not conducive to the relationship for a visitor to ask the offender point-blank, "what he's in for." It's not only an invasion of the inmate's privacy (the kind of thing one wouldn't ask a neighbor or co-worker). The information may also make it harder for the volunteer to listen and accept the offender as a person, initially, without prejudgment.

When an offender has developed a relationship with a volunteer, he may choose to discuss his offense. At that time the volunteer, too, may feel more at ease and able to listen and respond without moralizing or judging.

Being a good role model

Many offenders feel they've been let down by people. They may hold negative views that other people don't care about them or that people generally are no good. They will be watching your behavior to demonstrate that their negative theories are true--and with a glimmer of hope that there really is some good in the world. This means that a volunteer's behavior can have a powerful effect in motivating an offender to re-evaluate his or her beliefs and directions in life.

Some of the significant behaviors volunteers can demonstrate are:

Responsibility. Doing what you say you'll do. The volunteer should be present on time and prepared to do what he has planned. If this is not possible, he renegotiates what will be done. If he cannot be there, he calls to cancel. If he can't do it at all he finds someone who can.

Honesty. He is not evasive about his limits but states them clearly. He doesn't hurt others by saying painful things that aren't helpful in the name of honesty.

But he can confront another with his doubts when he is told something that doesn't sound right. He doesn't act gullible so that he can appear to be trusting when he doesn't feel it. He trusts his instincts to protect himself without attacking the other person's feelings of self-worth.

Friendliness. The volunteer must often be in the position of being the first to smile, speak, or shake a hand. He or she must know how to offer friendship without forcing it. Sometimes that means saying "hello" and exchanging only a few remarks several times before getting much of a response.

Respect for authority. The volunteer can show that he or she neither fears nor distrusts authority, but follows rules and procedures because cooperation is the basis of successful human enterprises. He expects that if he cooperates, his needs, too, will be met by the others within the system. The volunteer does not undercut staff in conversation and encourages offenders to take appropriate action if they have complaints.

Self-Respect. The volunteer must always treat his own needs and limits with respect. When asked for special favors, he feels free to refuse, to take time to consider, and/or to consult with the appropriate staff member if the request raises questions in his mind.

Appropriateness of appearance and manner. The volunteer should, of course, be neat, clean, and appropriately and modestly dressed. He is most effective when his language and manner reflect a positive outlook, and he does not attempt to relate by imitating "street" language and behaviors. He or she is not ashamed of being "straight" or apologetic because he is not incarcerated. He feels O.K. about being a stable person and believes that the offender, too, can lead and enjoy a straight life.

Confidentiality

Many offenders do not want it known that they have been convicted and are incarcerated or under the supervision of a probation officer. Volunteers should not name the offender or discuss his offenses or personal business with persons who are not directly involved with his treatment. Volunteer probation counselors who accompany their clients to social and recreational activities should simply introduce the

clients as a friend. The offender who wishes to share more information concerning his background is then free to do so.

Helping people to help themselves

People who are provided with a positive, nourishing environment have the ability to "grow themselves." That is, they don't usually need to be told what is right or wrong in order to improve themselves. Unfortunately, this is not always readily apparent because some who have learned self-destructive and socially disruptive behaviors take a long time to respond to the caring and respect they receive from others. Effective volunteers are those who are prepared to retain their belief in the power of others to help themselves--in spite of the seeming disinterest or resistance of their clients.

Personal growth for every human being requires a relationship in which the person can feel accepted and respected and in which he feels free to express himself honestly and completely. Volunteers can do their part to develop this kind of relationship in the following ways:

Accepting and listening. To accept another person is to accept that they have a right to whatever feelings they express--that it is all right with you for them to have and to express these feelings. This is not always easy for the listener, as each of us has our own personal fears and biases. However, this kind of listening is the essence of giving to another person.

Expressing personal limits. It is an act of respect to let another know that there are behaviors that are not acceptable to you and that you will not foster. This means that you continually demonstrate to the other that you expect considerate and cooperative behavior from him no matter what you have seen in the past.

Sharing yourself. Share your own growth experiences, struggles, values, and joys with your client--but only when you know he is interested! Many offenders are chronically anxious or depressed. Their minds are frequently turned inward where they rehearse anticipated conflicts or review old hurts. Most of the time, you will probably need to be the listener. But there will come a time when you can share something that has been valuable for you with your client.

Being positive in outlook. This doesn't mean being a Pollyanna, cheerful at all times regardless of your true feelings! It does mean believing that there is good in everyone and that each human being has the resources to help himself. It also means avoiding gossip and griping, and taking positive action instead.

Having empathy for the other. Having empathy means we do not see the other as a pathetic, weaker or lesser person but are willing to try to understand what it's like to "be in his shoes." We don't have to agree with his thinking to understand his feelings. He may, for example, be responsible for causing his own pain--but it still hurts.

VOLUNTEER BENEFITS

Liability and Workmen's Compensation

Volunteers working under the supervision, direction, or control of a State agency receive coverage for liability and workmen's compensation insurance. Any such injuries should be reported to the agency head or volunteer director immediately, and within 24 hours of the occurrence.

Meals while on duty

Volunteers assigned to correctional centers may take meals at the same expense as for employees if they are normally working at the facility at that hour. The volunteer has the responsibility of making prior arrangements for lunch through staff so that the steward can plan accordingly.

Mileage

The Internal Revenue Service permits volunteers to deduct mileage expenses for volunteer assignments. The present rate is a flat 8¢ a mile.

FREQUENT CONTACTS FOR VOLUNTEERS

Adult Probation and Parole Unit Division of Corrections Dept. of Health & Social Services State of Alaska Suite 401, MacKay Building 338 Denali Street Anchorage, Alaska 99501	274-1534
Anchorage Correctional Center DOC/DHSS/State of Alaska 628 W. 3rd Avenue Anchorage, Alaska 99501	277-1479
Superintendent	277-3790
Eagle River Correctional Center DOC/DHSS/State of Alaska P.O. Box 600 Eagle River, Alaska 99577	694-9511
Inmates	694-9795/6 694-2742
New Start Center DOC/DHSS/State of Alaska 327 Barrow Street Anchorage, Alaska 99501	274-5525
Palmer Correctional Center DOC/DHSS/State of Alaska P.O. Box 919 Palmer, Alaska 99645	745-4262
Ridgeview Correctional Center DOC/DHSS/State of Alaska 6505 Old Seward Highway Anchorage, Alaska 99502	349-4685
Volunteers in Corrections DOC/DHSS/State of Alaska 327 Barrow Street Anchorage, Alaska 99501	274-5525